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Attitude Towards Teaching Career - Initial Assessment of First Year Students

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Abstract: *A career option requires for first year students a first evaluation of the proposed academic offer, and, therefore, a self-assessment. Such moment activate the adaptive resources by appealing spontaneous assessments of attitudes. The attitudes towards teaching career become now the teleological landmarks necessary for career decision. In this paper we present the results of an investigative inquiry which aimed to reveal the first year students' attitude towards the teaching career. We supposed that the attitudinal dimensions are related to independent variables as environment, gender, faculty and personality factors. The results showed that only gender and faculty determine significant differences in attitudinal dimensions.*

Key words: *attitude toward teaching, attitudinal dimensions, personality factors*

1. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Attitude is the reaction of the person, his predisposition to react in a certain way to characteristic situations and events of reality. The *attitude concept* is a complex mental state involving beliefs, feelings, values and dispositions to act in certain way. According to certain authors, attitude is a hypothetical construct that represents an individual's like or dislike for an item and influence his interaction with the surrounding world (Fishbein, Ajzen, 1975). Ajzen (2001) consider that the evaluative dimensions of attitude can take many forms such as good-bad, harmful-beneficial, pleasant-unpleasant, and likable-dislikable.

Attitude has an *object (attitude object)* evaluated by subject's affective, cognitive, and behavioral processes of experiences (*attitude sources*). This attitude sources disposes the person to emit either implicit or explicit affective, cognitive, or behavioral evaluative responses (*attitude functions*) (Eagly, 1992). In this perspective, the surrounding objects become charged with positive or negative value. This view captures an important aspect of attitudes - they depend on personal values. The evaluation of reality is the common element of all attitude definitions (Fishbein, Ajzen, 1975, Eagly, 1992).

Between attitude and their external manifestations in the form of opinion or action, there isn't a perfect and unconditional compliance. This is evidenced by another perspective that questioned including the stability of attitudes. According to research authors Erikson (1959), West Pines (1995), Wilson (1979) quoted by H. Bloch et al. (2006) the subject has a "database", a complex set of factors relevant information to form an attitude, but are only partially activated in attitudes.

Although, over time, the definitions of this concept have evolved, the constant element is the assessment of specific attitudes. Such a conception that defines attitude only in terms of evaluation, overall favorable or unfavorable to an object is given by the authors Eagly AH (1993) and M. Fishbein (1975) and Ajzen (1975), Rosenberg (1968). This conception

consider attitude as a consequence of beliefs. The following formula shows the attitude as a consequence of subject's beliefs (Bloch et al., 2006) .

$$A = \sum_{i=1}^n b_i e_i$$

i – attribute, e_i – attribute evaluation, b_i – subjective probability

Under the proposed formula, the subjective value of an object is given by the sum value of attributes considered and the probability that the object hold each attribute (cf. Bloch et al, 2006).

A theoretical conception which is in continuation of the already mentioned is the one given by TM Newcomb (1970). In this view, the attitude reflects the way in which past experience is gained, maintained and held in individual form that is activated when it approaches a new situation. The attitude appears to be a link between the dominant internal psychological state of the person and to lots of social situations within the context of his social life.

The main characteristics of attitudes proposed by this author are:

- a) the direction or orientation - a positive sign (positive) or negative (unfavorable) towards the object of an emotion: the positive attitude determine to the person the tendency to be closer to the object while the negative attitude creates a negative trends, removal;
- b) the degree of intensity – expressing the gradation of two segments of emotion – positive or negative;
- c) attitude dynamics - conditioned on the characteristics of the object reference:
 - c1. dimensionality - the number and variety of the component object (the stimuli can be one-dimensional or more complex);
 - c2. surface or extent of the understandable object - the number of features available to observation and understanding;
 - c3. psychological centrality of the object to the subject;
 - c4. sociality - "social objects" (other people) is the main source of forming attitudes.

Thee evaluative component is one that remains, and according to this view, the core of attitudes.

The external expression of the attitude is the opinion and the action. The opinion is verbal-propositional form of exteriorization of the attitude consisting in judges of value and acceptance (agreement) or reject (disagree) in line to various situations, events and values. The action is the directly relation of the subject with object and carrying out steps (changes) to integrate the situation, amending or removing them.

There isn't a perfect and unconditional compliance between attitude and his external manifestations in the form of opinion or action. This is evidenced by another theoretical perspective that questioned the stability of attitudes. According to research authors Erikson (1959), West Pines (1995), Wilson (1979) quoted by Bloch et al. (2006) the subject has a "database", a complex set of factors relevant information to form an attitude, but only partially activated in attitudes. The selective activation of information in the database depends on the context factors that may lead to some instability in attitudes. The stabilization and the internalization of attitudes is a lengthy process, which involves crystallizing a constant used representation.

The attitude toward teaching reflects her or his occupational teaching understanding (Can, 1987) and is considered a determinant professional behavior.

The purpose of this study was to assess the in training teachers 'attitude toward teaching in terms of their personality traits, their academic results and choice, their area of origin and gender.

2. PURPOSE OF STUDY

2.1. The research purpose:

The study aims to identify the attitudes towards the teaching career for first year students enrolled in psychological and pedagogical module.

The research hypotheses

1. Attitude towards teaching career differs significantly depending on personality factors: impulsivity, anxiety, aggression, activity and sociability.
2. Attitude towards teaching career differs significantly depending on the student's faculty.
3. Attitude towards teaching career differs significantly to the average high school graduation.
4. Attitude towards teaching career differs significantly in terms of area of origin (urban, rural).
5. Attitude towards teaching career shows significant differences by gender.

2.2. Methods

Our investigation focuses on in-training teachers, who are preparing for a teaching career during their university studies. We aimed at analyzing how students' attitude towards teaching differs depending on independent variables (personality factors, faculty, average of high school graduation, environment and gender).

2.3. Measures

Personality factors: For this variable, we employed the *Personality Inventory ZKPQ* (99 assertions quoted yes or no) which measures five dimensions of personality: *impulsivity, anxiety, aggressiveness, activity, sociability*.

Attitude toward teaching career: We appraised this aspect in terms of the evaluated object of attitude: attitude toward oneself as a teacher, attitude toward teaching activity, attitude toward others as educational partners. For this purpose we constructed a 21-item scale ($\alpha = .86$), with 7 item for each aspect. Because of the gradual variations of attitudes, the statements were arranged on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree).

The instruments were applied in the first semester of the academic year in the first seminars of Educational Psychology. The application was held in paper-pencil version, without time limit, the average completion being 30 minutes.

2.4. Participants

The participants (N = 254) were first year students at “Stefan cel Mare” University of Suceava. All were enrolled in the teaching training module. The 254 investigated students represent 10% from first year students of each faculty. The table above illustrates the sample distribution.

Table 1: Distribution of participants on four variables

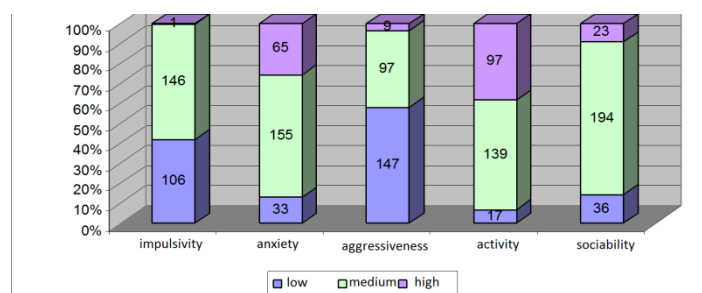
Participants		number	percent %
N=254	faculty	teaching	85
		non- teaching	169
	gender	F	149
		M	105
	environment	rural	86
		urban	168
	average of high school graduation	6-7	3
		7-8	52
		8-9	108
		9-10	56
		NR	39

3. FINDINGS AND RESULTS

3.1. Descriptive Results on Personality Factors

As can be seen at Fig. 1, 75% of subjects have average scores on sociability. 0.4% of subjects had lower values at the impulsivity. By comparing the five personality factors, the activity recorded the highest percentage of high scores (38%). Average anxiety levels characterizing 60% of students.

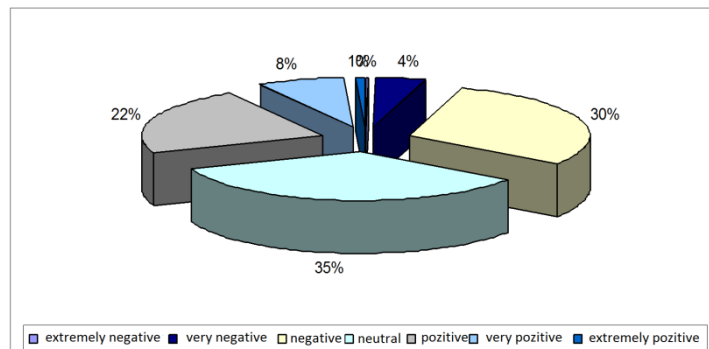
Figure 1: Descriptive results on personality factors



3.2. Descriptive Results on Attitude Toward Teaching

According to the distribution of scores on a 7-step scale with equal intervals, we have the following results: extremely negative attitude (0,3%), very negative attitude (4,3%), negative attitude (29%), neutral attitude (33%), positive attitude (21%), very positive attitude (7,4%), extremely positive attitude (0,7%) (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Descriptive results on attitude toward teaching



3.3. Results on Hypothesis 1

Attitude towards teaching career differs significantly depending on personality factors: impulsivity, anxiety, aggression, activity and sociability.

In order to analyze the relation between the attitude towards teaching career and the personality factors we used the Pearson correlation coefficient. The obtained results showed no significant correlation between these variables. The One-Way ANOVA analysis also showed any difference between groups of students with high, medium and low scores to the investigated personality factors in terms of attitude towards teaching career (Table 2).

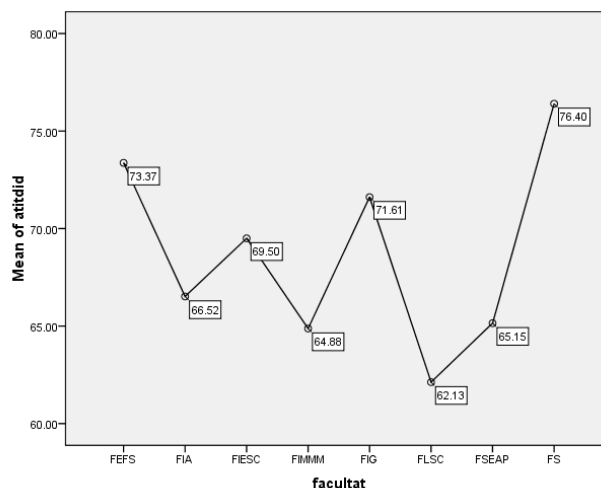
Table 2: Differences between groups in terms of personality factors

	F	Sig.
Oneway didattit by neuroticism	1.134	0.323
Oneway didattit by sociability	1.317	0.270
Oneway didattit by aggressiveness	0.430	0.651
Oneway didattit by impulsivity	0.046	0.955
Oneway didattit by activity	1.134	0.323

3.4. Results on Hypothesis 2

Attitude towards teaching career differs significantly depending on the student's faculty.

Figure 3: Means of attitudes towards teaching by faculty variable



As Fig.3 shows, the faculty determines significant differences between students in terms of attitude towards the teaching career. There are significant differences between students of Physical Education and Sports and students of Letters and Communication Sciences ($F= 11,243$; $p< .05$). The students of PES have a significant positive attitude toward didactic career than students of LCS. There are significant differences between students of Forestry and students of Letters and Communication Sciences ($F= 14,275$; $p< .05$). The students of Forestry have a significant positive attitude toward didactic career than students of LCS.

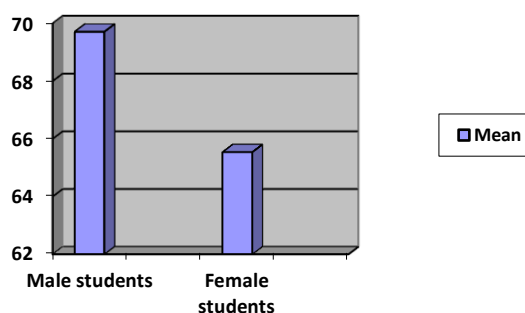
3.5. Results on Hypothesis 3

Attitude towards teaching career differs significantly to the average high school graduation. Average high school graduation does not affect the attitude towards the teaching career. The groups of students with average grades, high and very high do not differ in terms of attitude towards the teaching career ($F= 14,275$; $p> .05$).

3.6. Results on Hypothesis 4

Attitude towards teaching career differs significantly in terms of area of origin (urban, rural). The environment does not determine significant differences between students in terms of attitude towards the teaching career ($t=0.761$, $p> .05$).

Figure 4: Differences between male students and females students on attitude toward teaching



3.7. Results on Hypothesis 5

Attitude towards teaching career shows significant differences by gender. Gender determines significant differences of attitude towards the teaching career. There are significant differences between female students and male students in terms of reporting to the teaching career ($F= 2.588$; $p< .05$). Male students had significantly higher scores and hence an attitude that means valuing a possible professional career.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this paper is to reveal the first year students' attitude towards the teaching career. Therefore we have analyzed the relation between the attitudinal dimensions and the independent variables as environment, gender, faculty and personality factors. The results showed that only gender and faculty determine significant differences in attitudinal dimensions. The significant correlations between the type of faculty and the attitudes towards teaching career add new hypotheses for further investigation. We can hypothesize that skills (as landmarks in academic orientation, namely the choice of the faculty) might influence attitudes toward teaching career. On the other side, sound neutral attitude toward teaching of LSC students towards teaching career contradicts the reality on the labor market: the majority of graduates are teachers. We suppose there are intervening variables and redefine initial attitude towards the teaching profession. These variables can be the starting points for future research.

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